

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 6478

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, BG, SU
SUBJECT: FIRYUBIN VISITS BANGLADESH

1. SUMMARY: SOVIET DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER FIRYUBIN
VISITED BANGLADESH DECEMBER 23-26 AND HELD
DISCUSSIONS WITH BDG LEADERSHIP. AT CONCLUSION OF VISIT BDG AND
USSR STATED AGREEMENT ON PRINCIPLE OF PEACE IN SUBCONTINENT AND
NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES AMONG
SOUTH ASIAN POWERS. EDITORIAL REACTION SO
FAR HAS BEEN CAUTIOUSLY NEGATIVE TO VISIT, CENTERING
ON PRESUMED LACK OF SOVIET SUPPORT IN DISPUTES WITH
INDIA. ONE MFA SOURCE EXPRESSED HIS OPINION THAT SOVIET
ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE WOULD ACCELERATE FROM NEAR STANDSTILL
SINCE DEPOSITION OF MUJIB. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY ANY CONCRETE
POLITICAL ADVANTAGE WILL ACCRUE TO BANGLADESH OR THAT MILITARY
SHIPMENTS WILL RESUME IN ANY SIGNIFICANT QUANTITY. ABOUT
SAME TIME SOVIET "CULTURAL" DELEGATION WAS ALSO HERE. END
SUMMARY.

2. SOVIET DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER NICOLAI FIRYUBIN
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ARRIVED IN DACCA DECEMBER 23 ACCOMPANIED BY SEVERAL
OFFICIALS OF FOREIGN MINISTRY. FORMAL DISCUSSIONS WERE
HELD WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK HUSAIN, BUT DURING
VISIT FIRYUBIN MET SEPARATELY WITH PRESIDENT SAYEM, CHIEF
MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR GENERAL ZIAUR RAHMAN, AND BOTH
DEPUTY CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATORS. HE PAID A VISIT

TO A JUTE MILL AND SPOKE IN RESPONSE TO A TOAST AT A DINNER GIVEN BY HUSAIN, AND AGAIN AT ONE GIVEN BY DCMLA AIR VICE MARSHAL MAHMUD.

3. AT HUSAIN DINNER DECEMBER 24 FIRYUBIN POINTEDLY REMINDED BANGLADESHIS OF SOVIET ASSISTANCE IN LIBERATION WAR OF 1971. BY IMPLICATION THIS SERVED AS A REMINDER THAT UNDER MUJIB SOVIET-BANGLADESHI RELATIONS HAD BEEN CLOSE AND THAT THERE HAD BEEN REWARDS FROM THE SOVIET UNION IN THE FORM OF ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND POLITICAL SUPPORT. FIRYUBIN WENT ON TO MENTION THE SUPPORT GIVEN TO BANGLADESH'S LONG DELAYED APPLICATION FOR UN MEMBERSHIP.

4. HUSAIN IN HIS REMARKS STATED THAT BANGLADESH "ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE" TO ITS RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND THAT THE COUNTRY'S POLICY WAS FRIENDSHIP WITH ALL NATIONS, LARGE OR SMALL "ON THE BASIS OF MUTUAL RESPECT FOR EQUALITY AND SOVEREIGNTY". WHETHER THIS WAS A MEANS TO CONVEY BANGLADESHI ANNOYANCE AT PAST AND POSSIBLE PRESENT SOVIET INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS HERE IS NOT CLEAR.

5. THE FINAL STATEMENT ON THE MEETINGS EXPRESSED THE INTEREST OF BOTH NATIONS IN PEACE IN THE SUBCONTINENT AND IN THE SETTLEMENT OF ALL INTRA-REGIONAL DISPUTES THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS. THE STATEMENT SAID ALSO THAT SUCH ISSUES AS THE MIDDLE EAST, DETENTE, DISARMAMENT AND THE INDIAN OCEAN WERE DISCUSSED.

6. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT IF BANGLADESH HAD ANY HOPE FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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SOVIET SUPPORT ON FARAKKA OR FOR THE RESUMPTION OF MILITARY DELIVERIES IT WAS UNSUCCESSFUL. ON THE OTHER HAND, AN MFA OFFICIAL TOLD ECON COUNSELOR THAT HE THOUGHT THE SOVIETS WOULD STEP UP DELIVERIES OF PREVIOUSLY COMMITTED ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE ALTHOUGH APPARENTLY NO NEW AGREEMENTS WERE MADE.

7. SO FAR THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE EDITORIAL REACTION. THE INDEPENDENT (AND SELF-PROCLAIMED "PRO-DEMOCRATIC") ITTEFAG SAID DECEMBER 27 THAT IF THE SOVIETS WANTED TO DO SOMETHING FOR BANGLADESH THEY COULD SUPPORT "US ON SUCH LIFE AND DEATH QUESTIONS AS FARAKKA". LEFTIST, BUT LEANING TOWARD PEKING, WEEKLY HOLIDAY, SUGGESTED THAT THE USSR IS BECOMING DISENCHANTED WITH INDIA (CITING, INTER ALIA, "RIGHTIST" ECONOMIC POLICIES, ATTACKS ON THE CPI AND "RAPPROCHEMENT" WITH CHINA AND PAKISTAN) AND MAY BE HOPING FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH BANGLADESH AS A COUNTER TO THIS. EDITORIAL CLOSED WITH STATEMENT "BANGLADESH NEVER DID NOR WILL TOLERATE OVERLORDSHIP OF ANY COUNTRY."

8. ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH FIRYUBIN VISIT, TWO
MAN "CULTURAL" DELEGATION LED BY PROFESSOR YURI GAN-
KOVSKY VISITED DACCA AND HOBNOBBED WITH ACADEMICS AND
HANGERS-ON OF BANGLADESH-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY.
GANKOVSKY, WHO SPEAKS ENGLISH MODERATELY WELL, HAS WRITTEN
ON PAKISTAN, AND HAS SOME REPUTATION IN WESTERN AS WELL AS
SUB-CONTINENTAL SCHOLARLY CIRCLES.

9. DURING VISITS USSR EMBASSY ANNOUNCED SOVIET FILM
WEEKS SCHEDULED FOR DACCA AND CHITTAGONG.

10. TWO VISITS AND FILM WEEKS ARE HIGHEST LEVEL OF
PUBLIC ACTIVITY BY SOVIETS IN BANGLADESH IN A LONG TIME.
NONETHELESS, WE SEE LITTLE IMMEDIATE GAIN FOR SOVIETS WHO
REPUTATION IS STILL CLOUDED BY RELATIONS WITH MUJIB REGIME
AND CONTINUED TREATY RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIA WHICH
BANGLADESHIS BELIEVE COULD BE USED AGAINST THEM.
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